Black Faculty in the Academy: Narratives for Negotiating Identity and Achieving Career Success

Bonner, II, Fred A.; marbley, aretha faye; Tuitt, Frank; Robinson, Petra A.; Banda, Rosa M.; and Hughes, Robin L., eds.
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Book Review

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The editors and selected contributors provide cogent insights on navigating academic environments as faculty of color. Critical Race Theory (CRT) is a conceptual and methodological lens to identify issues of racial incongruity (1). The strength of this volume of 13 chapters is the use of first-person Scholarly Personal Narratives (SPN) by contributing black scholars to analyze particular experiences and modes for survival, if not reform in educational institutions (3). In the introduction, editors Truitt and Bonner review the evolution of CRT to conceptualize "core thematic trends" (4) that collectively structure the narrative content and divide the volume into three parts.

Part 1 is titled "Black Faculty: Navigating Daily Encounters with Racism." Chapters 2 through 5 are narratives on interpersonal experiences in institutional climates. In chapter 2, Giles details CRT to analyze presumptive behaviors encountered since his formative years to his current professorial appointment. Moore focuses on racial microaggressions in chapter 3 (24) to note environmental similarities of his upbringing in a predominately white community and his exposure to social systems in the work environment at a predominately white academy. Lewis co-authors chapter 4 to highlight "insider-outsider experiences" (33) as a British black man, while Helm highlights her duality in America as black female navigating racialized gender stereotypes that undermine professional credibility (35). In chapter 5, Shavers, Butler, and Moore cite "cultural taxation" (42), a phenomena of commodification risks for underrepresented black faculty confounded by excessive service project requirements as token institutional representatives.

In Part II, "Black Faculty, Meaning Making through Interdisciplinary and Intersectional Approaches," chapters 6 through 9 offer multidisciplinary intersectional approaches to recognize formal institutional rules and navigate informal expectations. Five contributors to chapter 6 – marbley, Rouson, Li, Huang, and Taylor – use a multiple theoretical lens to assess microaggression in performance-compliance to diversity expectations, parity of scholarship praxis, and tenure requirements. Croom and Patton overlay "critical race feminism" (66) onto CRT analysis in chapter 7 to identify dynamics that black female academicians encounter from black and white colleagues. Similarly, in chapter 8, Andrews details institutional macroaggressions and interpersonal microaggressions (80) that hinder female scholars' inclusion in tenure-track aspirations unless support of professional identity and authenticity is cultivated. Stewart shares nuanced sexuality challenges in chapter 9 as an "outsider-within" (95) where her triadic identities, black, female, and queer are stereotyped tropes for discrimination and invisibility in the academy.

Finally, Part III, "Back Faculty, Finding Strength through Critical Mentoring of Relationships" includes that focus on mentor relationships as supportive modes of self-reflection and networking. In chapter 10, Flowers relays a critical need for candid self-reflection with trusted allies as mentors outside institutions if not found within. Smith asserts in chapter 11 that tenure does not guarantee collegial inclusion, respect, or appointment to leading roles; still, attentiveness to self-esteem, persona perceptions, and cultivating allied mentors helps to build critical social capital (117). Finally, chapters 12 and 13 focus on developing mentor relationships with students as Bonner recalls mentor influences as a student that inform his thematic roles as a faculty mentor to students (123). In the final chapter, Tomlinson-Clarke also urges faculty-student relationship with relational mentoring lessons as a graduate student in a historically black college (HBCU) and as a doctoral student in a predominately white university (PWI).

In summary, *Black Faculty in the Academy* is not a prescriptive behavioral guide of dos and don'ts; rather, the diverse analyses of lived experiences with recommendations provide avenues for readers to construct reflective assessment of present individualized situations. As an African American professor, I resonated with the narratives as discernment tools for success. The book also provides a starting point for collective institutional discourse; however, in my opinion, the volume would benefit from a section of narratives by non-black faculty who acknowledge critical race theory issues that require discourse in institutional settings where non-black colleagues might otherwise be defensive to the critique of the book's black contributors. Nevertheless, for new faculty of color as the likely primary readers, this volume offers powerful insights of CRT to raise awareness and encourage development of contextual navigation strategies.

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